

Appl. No.: 09/981,511
Amdt. dated July 24, 2003
Reply to Office action of April 29, 2003

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the Final Office Action dated April 29, 2003, the Examiner: (1) rejects claims 1-9, 11-13, 15-18 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over prior art Figure 1 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,412,546 (*Lin et al.*).

With this Preliminary Amendment, Applicants have cancelled claims 15-18, have amended claims 1, 11 and 20, and have added claims 21-24. Applicants reserve the right to pursue cancelled claims 10 and 14-19 in a continuing application. Claims 2-9 and 12-13 were not amended because they depend from allowable claims. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are allowable over the art of record.

I. SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Applicants have provided a replacement paragraph [0007] to correct a typographical error. Applicants submit that replacement paragraph [0007] does not contain new matter.

II. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

A. Claims 1-9

Amended claim 1 comprises a plurality of stop surfaces which permits a spring to be variably compressed. Claim 1 finds support in the specification, page 8, paragraph [0029] and Figure 8.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither prior art Figure 1, nor *Lin et al.* teach, suggest or even imply a plurality of stop surfaces which permits a spring to be variably compressed.

Claims 2-9, which depend from claim 1, include additional patentable limitations and find support throughout the specification.

B. Claims 11-13

Amended claim 11 comprises a plurality of clips, wherein each clip is adapted to engage a post in a plurality of different positions to compress a spring to one of a plurality of different compressive forces. Claim 11 finds support in the specification, page 8, paragraph [0029] and Figure 8.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither prior art Figure 1, nor *Lin et al.* teach, suggest or even imply a clip adapted to engage a post in a plurality of

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different positions to compress a spring to one of a plurality of different compressive forces.

Claims 12-13, which depend from claim 11, include additional patentable limitations and find support throughout the specification.

C. Claims 20-24

Amended claim 20 comprises a plurality of clips, wherein each of the clips has clip members that are pushed apart to engage a post in a plurality of different positions. Claim 20 finds support in the specification, page 6, paragraph [0024] and Figure 3.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither prior art Figure 1, nor *Lin et al.* teach, suggest or even imply a clip having clip members that are pushed apart to engage a post in a plurality of different positions.

Claims 21-24, which depend from claim 20, include additional patentable limitations and find support throughout the specification.

III. NEW CLAIMS

New claims 21-24 depend from claim 20 and do not constitute new matter. New claims 21-24 find support in the specification, page 6, paragraph [0024] and Figure 3.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would expedite the resolution of this case, he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned.

In the course of the foregoing discussions, Applicants may have at times referred to claim limitations in shorthand fashion, or may have focused on a particular claim element. This discussion should not be interpreted to mean that the other limitations can be ignored or dismissed. The claims must be viewed as a whole, and each limitation of the claims must be considered when determining the patentability of the claims. Moreover, it should be understood that there may be other distinctions between the claims and the prior art which have yet to be raised, but which may be raised in the future.